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## Media Advisory

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### **Louisiana Conservationist Wins 2005 National Wetlands Award**

Hazel Sinclair of Covington, Louisiana, has won the 2005 National Wetlands Award for Wetland Community Leader. She will be honored for her commitment to Louisiana's coastal wetlands and public education at a ceremony on May 18th in Room B339 in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C.

"Hazel's commitment to educating others and serving as a positive catalyst for change in her community is admirable. Her passion and enthusiasm for wetlands and the natural world is boundless. To have the opportunity to work on development and wetlands issue with someone like Hazel is rare and exciting, and her dedication to protecting our community's resources makes her a true environmental champion," says Jill Mastrototaro, environmental coordinator of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation.

In 1999, a nearly 200-acre subdivision was sited in a pristine wetland near her home. Sinclair spent more than five years leading an effort to protect the area, working with fifteen civic groups, promoting conservation techniques, pursuing legal proceedings, and partnering with government entities. Assisted by the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, Sinclair helped reverse the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' § 404 wetland permit for the subdivision and successfully overturned the project's state-issued water quality permit. Recognizing a serious need to educate her community about the value of wetland protection, Sinclair has also written, produced, and financed two documentary films on wetlands. Sinclair is an active participant in St. Tammany Parish's comprehensive land-use planning process and recently founded a new citizen-based group, Advocates for Smart Growth.

"To simply characterize Hazel as a community activist would be an understatement," states George Hopkins, founding president of Save St. Tammany, a local group that supports balanced growth and land use planning. "She is a leader with the courage and conviction to stand up in public forums and incisively educate our elected officials about the devastating consequences of scores of ill-contrived subdivisions, shopping centers, traffic and drainage plans, and industrial projects."

Since 1989, the National Wetlands Awards program has honored exceptional individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary effort, innovation, and excellence in wetland conservation, research, or education through programs or projects at the regional, state, or local level. The program is co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Federal Highway Administration, and NOAA Fisheries.

"This year's awardees, who are at the forefront of efforts to protect America's valuable aquatic resources, provide a sense of confidence that we have the leadership, talent, and commitment to realize the challenging goal that we have established of moving beyond 'no net loss' to achieving an overall increase in the Nation's wetlands," said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Assistant Administrator for Water, Benjamin H. Grumbles.

For more information please contact Maria Placht at the Environmental Law Institute at (202) 939-3860 or [wetlandsawards@eli.org](mailto:wetlandsawards@eli.org), or visit <http://www2.eli.org/nwa/nwaprogram.htm>.

*The Environmental Law Institute is an independent, non-profit research and educational organization based in Washington, D.C. The Institute serves the environmental profession in business, government, the private bar, public interest organizations, academia, and the press.*

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